



Climate Jobs Rhode Island
1540 Pontiac Ave Suite A,
Cranston, RI 02920

February 4, 2026

The Honorable Marvin L. Abney
House Finance
Rhode Island State House
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Re: House Bill 7127 Article 2 - FY2026 Budget/RIPTA Funding

Dear Chairman Abney and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. On behalf of Climate Jobs Rhode Island, I write in **strong support of Article 2 of House Bill 7127 for the \$14.3 million allocated to the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA).**

Climate Jobs Rhode Island (CJRI) is a coalition of more than thirty (30) environmental, labor and community organizations committed to working together to make Rhode Island a national leader in the development of a resilient 21st century economy through a Just Transition, one that centers our frontline communities and frontline workers.

Our members range from those who represent the workers who build, repair, and maintain Rhode Island's critical infrastructure and energy systems like the RI Building and Construction Trades Council, to environmental and community organizations like The Nature Conservancy, United Way of RI, and the Childhood Lead Action Project, to name a few.

Tens of thousands of Rhode Islanders rely on RIPTA every day; students traveling to school, workers commuting to jobsites and offices, seniors and families accessing healthcare, groceries, and other essential services. For many, RIPTA is not optional, it is a lifeline. Yet, years of inadequate funding have undermined the system's ability to reliably provide these essential services.

In 2025, RIPTA faced the largest service reductions in the agency's 59 year history. The Save RIPTA coalition released the [2025 Service Cuts Impact Report](#) last month, citing a decline in ridership following service reductions to 45 out of 63 routes. **A 15% decrease in service equates to over 4,000 fewer daily riders, and a total loss of 113,684 annual hours of service.** Ironically, it now costs 29% more to deliver each hour of bus service as compared to before the 2025 budget reductions.

The consequences of these cuts are already being felt across Rhode Island. Service reductions, fare increases, and reduced operating hours disproportionately affect low-income and environmental justice communities- those already overburdened and underserved. With reduced service, good paying union jobs are lost, and countless working class people who rely on RIPTA are forced to use more expensive alternative means of transportation, or even risk their job because of inability to access these essential services entirely.

According to a Providence Streets Coalition survey cited in the report, **3.6% of respondents lost their jobs directly due to service cuts, 8% had their work hours reduced, and 30% felt at risk of losing employment altogether.** These outcomes underscore that transit funding is not simply a transportation issue, but a core economic and workforce issue.

Ensuring that RIPTA's deficit is addressed is not just a matter of supporting the agency, but of supporting Rhode Islanders who depend on public transit to access opportunity and maintain economic stability. A strong, reliable transit system reduces emissions and traffic congestion while providing equitable access to employment, education, healthcare, and other daily necessities. Just as importantly, RIPTA provides family-sustaining union jobs for the workers who operate, service, and maintain our buses- jobs that are vital to Rhode Island's workforce and clean energy future.

Without sufficient funding to address RIPTA's projected \$32.6M budget shortfall in 2026, these essential services will remain at risk. While this investment represents just a step toward addressing long-standing funding challenges, it is a necessary and meaningful action toward stabilizing service and preventing further harm to riders and workers alike.

We are in strong support of House bill 7127 Article 2 State Funds providing additional funding to RIPTA. We urge you to approve this measure.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Serena Russell".

Serena Russell
Policy Coordinator, Climate Jobs Rhode Island